

MEMORANDUM

Sister Cities Commission



Date: September 29, 2017

To: Councilmember Anthony Phan, Liaison

CC: Mayor and Council, Acting City Manager, City Attorney

From: Chair Dennis Grilli, on behalf of the Sister Cities Commission *D. Grilli*

Subject: Review of September 16-14, 2017 Dagupan Visit and Recommendations

Background

Under the auspices of our sister city relationship, the City of Dagupan, Philippines, visited Milpitas recently with a delegation of 10 students and eight adults. The Sister Cities Commission (SCC) staff liaison prepared attached documents, worked with Milpitas High School (MHS) administration and teachers to recruit home stay families for Dagupan students, and prepared separate itineraries that included activities for students and trainings with City staff for Dagupan adults.

The SCC greatly acknowledges the leadership and facilitation of Principal Francis Rojas and Assistant Principal Cheryl Rivera. School attendance and participation in Spirit Week activities at MHS is an integral part of the visiting sister city student's American experience.

Concerns

The following incidents occurred during the course of preparations and visit activities:

- Invitations requested within three weeks of travel for officials that were not included in the delegation;
- Communication on day of travel that three students would not be staying with assigned Milpitas homestays;
- Communication on day of arrival that one additional student would not be staying with assigned Milpitas homestay;
- On Tuesday, Sept. 26 Dagupan students received a text directing them to have homestay parents bring them to school at 7:30 a.m. (one half hour early) to meet with Mayor Fernandez before school;

- On Tuesday, Sept. 26 Mayor Fernandez arrived at MHS in the morning to unnecessarily pay the cafeteria \$200 for student lunches and requested a tour five hours before it was scheduled;
- On Tuesday, Sept. 26 Dagupan students were picked-up and taken from school at 3:00 p.m. by Mayor Fernandez without notifying host parents and the SCC staff liaison.

Outcomes

Finding host families is difficult and this behavior is counterproductive. These incidents created misgivings with host parents, MHS administrative staff, and opened the City to liability with regard to host student safety. The SCC finds that the results of actions outlined above, especially circumventing the vetting process of host family selection and the unilateral departure from an established itinerary without notification, is inappropriate and jeopardizes future student visits from the City of Dagupan.

In letters thanking host parents and MHS administrators, the SCC will include an apology for the inconveniences caused and provide an electronic evaluation form to obtain feedback.

While the SCC seeks to provide safe and enjoyable visits for Sister City students and officials, we are concerned about potential liability to our City. We therefore request legal review of the forms for host families and ways to convey program rules and expectations to our Sister Cities.

Recommendations

In order to assure cooperation from City of Dagupan representatives during future visits, and to unilaterally administer the Sister Cities Program, the SCC recommends the following:

1. Obtain City Attorney review of the host family application and expectations forms, and request opinion of additional requirements that address liability, if needed, and;
2. Prepare a Sister City Visit Expectations form specifically addressing rules for student visits, and;
3. Obtain written agreement from Sister City organizers to follow itineraries and expectations before plans are finalized and include flexibility to change itinerary activities with 72-hour notice.

The SCC's next meeting is October 26 when we plan to review comments and determine how to move forward to prepare for the upcoming student visits in 2018. Please advise the staff liaison when reviews and comments can be available.